

Diagnosis and Management of Concussion: A Position Statement of the Current Alaska State Board of Chiropractic Examiners

Author: Brian E. Larson, D.C., DACBSP®

Current Board Members:

Brian Larson, D.C., DACBSP®, Chair

John Wayne Aderhold, Public Member

James Morris, D.C.

Jeffrey Reinhardt, D.C.

Jonathan Vito, D.C.

Thomas Bay, Licensing Examiner

Reviewed, amended, and approved: September 28, 2018

As to the qualification of Chiropractic Physicians (Chiropractors) to diagnose and manage concussions in all populations, considering the recent change of statute recognizing chiropractic physicians are qualified to administer school preparticipation physical examinations, the Alaska State Board of Chiropractic Examiners responds:

DEFINITION:

Concussion is an area of sports medicine that is in continual evolution, from definition to diagnosis, treatment, and return to play guidelines. The general components of defining concussions include the following elements of a mild traumatic injury to the brain:

1. Trauma induced, whether direct blow to the head or indirect force transmitted through the body to the head;
2. Immediate or near immediate display of physical or neurological dysfunction;
3. Symptoms are transient;
4. Results in a graded set of clinical symptoms that may or may not involve loss of consciousness (LOC);
5. A functional disturbance rather than a structural injury;
6. Resolution of symptoms typically follows a sequential course of varying duration in time;

7. The signs and symptoms cannot be attributed to an alternative causation such as mental disease, medication, or mechanical injury to the neck, ears, and/or eyes.

Alaska Law

Alaska Statute 14.30.142... states:

- (c) A student who is suspected of having sustained a concussion during a practice or game shall be immediately removed from the practice or game.
- (d) A student who has been removed from participation in a practice or game for suspicion of concussion may not return to participation in practice or game play until the student has been evaluated and cleared for participation in writing by and athletic trainer or other qualified person who has received training, as verified in writing or electronically by the qualified person, in the evaluation and management of concussions. In the subsection, "qualified person" means either a
 - (1) health care provider who is licensed in the state or exempt from licensure under state law; or
 - (2) person who is acting at the direction and under the supervision of a physician who is licensed in the state or exempt from licensure under AS 08.64.370(1), (2), or (4).
- (e) A person who conducts an evaluation under (d) of this section and who is not paid for conducting the evaluation may not be held liable for civil damages resulting from an act or omission during the evaluation, except that the person may be held liable for reckless or intentional misconduct and for gross negligence.

This law pertains to children and adolescents under legal age in Alaska.

Qualifications to Diagnose, Manage, and Make Return-to-Play (RTP) Decisions

The Alaska Student Activities Association (ASAA), a private non-profit organization (PNP), is recognized by the Alaska Legislature, and acts as the general governing body for high school activities and sports in Alaska. As such, the ASAA recognizes advanced qualifications in sports medicine obtained by chiropractic physicians holding DACBSP® and CCSP® certifications of the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians® (ACBSP®) as qualified to Diagnose, Manage, and make RTP decisions relating to student athletes falling under ASAA jurisdiction. This board applauds that recognition.

Other governing bodies for various ages and sports (school districts, PNPs, etc.) typically default to ASAA Guideline for Concussions.

This board puts forth that chiropractic physicians licensed in Alaska *may* be qualified to diagnose, manage, and make RTP decisions with appropriate and ongoing training specifically related to the science of concussion. Additionally, this board holds forth that any health care provider licensed in Alaska, regardless of endpoint of education, is

equally unqualified to diagnose, manage, or make RTP decisions without the same level of current and ongoing concussion-specific training.

Concussion is a rapidly changing science. Several methods of evaluating and managing concussions, once held as standards, are now defunct. Several concepts and conditions related to concussions are now questioned, and much recent research held as proof of diagnosis is now recognized as flawed or presumptive. Concussion is not a science that can be learned once in professional training and filed away for the remainder of a professional career. Remaining constant in the field of concussion requires dedicated, ongoing, and relentless training.

This board sets forth current certification of the online CDC training Heads Up! On Concussion for Professionals (approximately 2 hours) and the ACBSP® Concussion Registry (ACR) (approximately 12.5 hours), with passing scores on the associated minimum competency examinations, as the standard of training for qualification to access, manage, and make RTP decisions related to concussed individuals of all populations in Alaska. We challenge all other professional boards to review the afore outlined materials and make such recommendations and qualifications to their respective members for the benefit and protection of the people of Alaska.

In review of the preceding material, the Alaska Board of Chiropractic Examiners finds that Chiropractic Physicians, properly licensed in Alaska, holding current DACBSP® and CCSP® certificates from the ACBSP®, as well as Alaska specialty-licensed Chiropractic Sports Physicians, Certified Chiropractic Sports Physicians, and Chiropractic Physicians who possess current CDC and ACR certificates are qualified and recommended to diagnose, manage, and make return-to-play or work decisions related to concussions.

This board requests that the Alaska Student Activities Association, as well as other health care professional boards, respect the findings and recommendation of this board.

Chiropractic physicians participating in concussion management are required to produce current (within 2 years) CDC and ACR certificates, upon request of patients or regulatory officials of the State of Alaska. Failure to do so constitutes a scope of practice violation and is subject to discipline.